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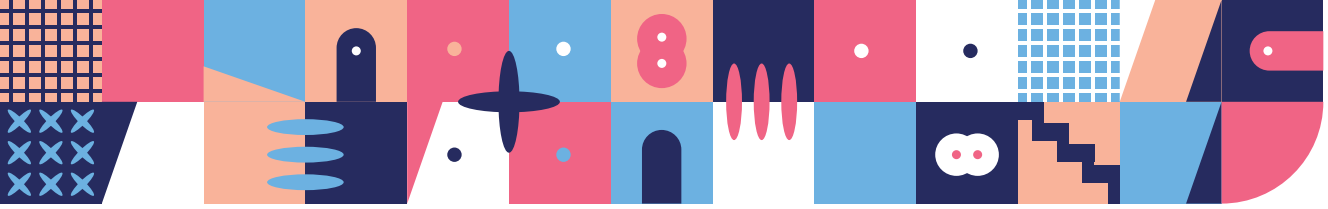
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From Positive Youth Development to Positive Youth Justice

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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December 4, 2025



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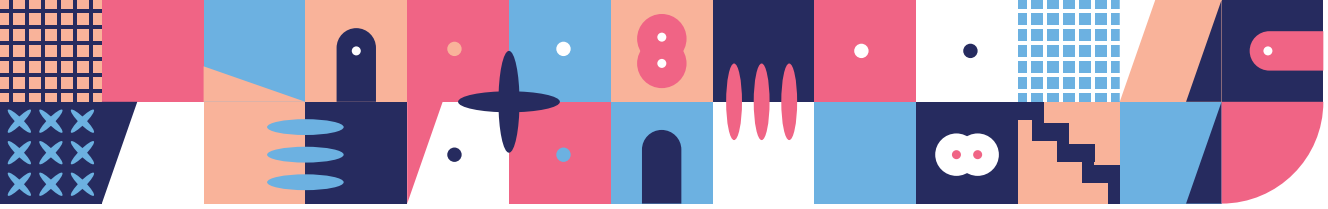
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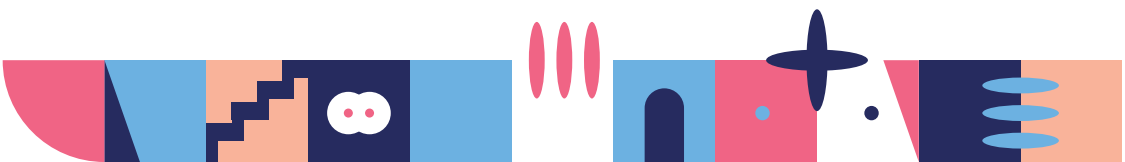
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PLENARY



UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES WITHIN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT IN SERBIA

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Compared to education systems in high-income countries, the Serbian education system places less emphasis on student mental health and lacks integration of mental health professionals in schools. Within a broader project, we conducted quantitative and qualitative studies to examine how school staff members understand, recognize, and address student mental health issues. All schools in Serbia were invited to participate. However, the response rate was low, resulting in a final sample of 556 participants, including teachers, school psychologists and pedagogists, principals, and administrative staff. The study aimed to: (a) validate instruments for assessing mental health literacy and measure school staff knowledge; (b) examine teachers' mental health stigma and its contributing factors; (c) analyze school staff responses to student mental health issues, including nonsuicidal self-injury (NSSI); and (d) identify school staff needs and concerns related to student mental health at schools. Although the results revealed relatively high levels of mental health literacy among school staff concerns were raised regarding the validity of assessment tools. Mental health literacy was linked to reduced behavioral but not cognitive aspects of stigma. In the absence of national protocols for students' mental health problems, schools in Serbia have mostly developed internal procedures of varying consistency and effectiveness. This project resulted in the development of an NSSI response protocol designed to support school staff in managing NSSI more effectively. School staff expressed concern and a perceived lack of competence in addressing students' mental health challenges, emphasizing the need for additional training and stronger collaboration with mental health and child protection services. This presentation discusses implications for school policy and practice, as well as methodological limitations, particularly the low participation rate.

Keywords: mental health, schools, teachers, stigma, self-injury, Serbia

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LONGITUDINAL DYNAMICS OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND ITS KEY CORRELATES

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Modern approaches to promoting mental health and developing effective prevention programs rely on strength-based models that focus on reinforcing protective mechanisms within various contexts. The overarching framework connecting these initiatives is the concept of Positive Development, which integrates insights from multiple interdisciplinary models, including Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Positive Youth Development (PYD), and Resilience Theory. According to this perspective, every young person has the potential to thrive and achieve positive outcomes if provided a nurturing environment. Successful adulthood is seen as the result of sustained investment in adaptive relationships across family, peers, school, and community. Positive development refers to outcomes that highlight individual achievements as well as contributions to the common good. Within this conceptualisation, the Five Cs model (Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring) represents the most researched framework for understanding how youth strengths develop and interact with mental health indicators. This presentation provides an overview of the theoretical foundations of the positive youth development approach and relevant international studies. Additionally, it offers insight into the results of an ongoing longitudinal project entitled. Testing the 5C Model of Positive Youth Development: Traditional and Digital Mobile Measurement (P.R.O.T.E.C.T.), conducted at the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Science in Zagreb and funded by the Croatian Science Foundation (UIP-2020-02-2852). Thus far, a structural equation modelling approach has shed light on the dynamics of the Five Cs with well-being, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and school climate over time. Longitudinal effects suggest that contextual support, youth mental health, and positive development are mutually reinforcing processes. These insights highlight the value of the positive youth development approach as a strong conceptual and empirical foundation for designing evidence-based prevention and mental health promotion programs. In conclusion, the presentation offers arguments for taking positive youth development into account when planning evidence-based interventions and mental health promotion activities.

Keywords: positive youth development, adolescence, mental health, mental health promotion, evidence-based programs

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POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT... FOR WHOM? EQUITY, CULTURE, AND CONTEXT IN PYD

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Positive Youth Development (PYD) has become a dominant normative framework for understanding adolescence and the transition to adulthood. Grounded in the Five Plus One Cs model (Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, Caring, and Contribution), PYD promotes universal principles of positive development. Yet, questions arise about its cultural universality, that is, the cultural roots and cross-cultural applicability of values and ideals shaping PYD. In Serbia, where young people face high unemployment, insecure and unstable employment conditions, corruption, and limited institutional support, the meaning of positive development is highly contextual and often ambiguous, especially for vulnerable and marginalized youth.

In such a setting, PYD can appear as a hopeful narrative that overlooks young people's experiences of powerlessness, anger, and apathy. Emphasizing individual strengths risks obscuring structural barriers and depoliticizing the youth through overly optimistic narratives that fail to address systemic injustice. However, young people's voices in Serbia reveal alternative pathways of positive development expressed through protest, solidarity, activism, and collective agency. Student and civic movements serve as spaces for cultivating critical consciousness, social responsibility, and political competence. In turn, they can help build a more meaningful pathway toward adulthood that couples positive youth development with positive social transformation.

This presentation explores how a contextualized PYD agenda in Serbia could link personal growth with social justice, autonomy, and participation. Drawing on examples from informal initiatives, schools, and local communities, it proposes a framework that recognizes young people as active partners in research, policy, and practice, thereby engaging with them instead of merely speaking about them.

Keywords: Positive Youth Development (PYD), cultural context, youth agency, social justice, equity

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DESIGNING AI FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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With generative AI rapidly permeating young people's lives educators worldwide facethe challenge of designing AI experiences that expand the youth's developmental capacities. Throughout history, the use of tools has propelled human development. Generative AI may become a developmental tool, but only if embedded in pedagogies that cultivate agency, identity, and co-creation of meaning-making. A key challenge in positive youth development is how to redistribute cognitive effort to support augmentation instead of atrophy. In other words, if generative AI is used to offload memory or problem-solving, it is necessary to ensure that this offloading creates space for higher-order reflection, relational competence, identity exploration, resilience, imagination, and other important educational outcomes. In constructivist terms, generative AI has the potential to become a co-agent of learning that augments positive youth development. However, it is pedagogy and not technology that has the central role in designing AI for positive development. The pedagogical principles of scaffolding, dialogical learning, and epistemological complexity and curiosity may steer collaboration with AI away from atrophy and towards more constructive educational outcomes. Positive youth development in the age of AI necessitates a shift from both technology avoidance and technology-centeredness towards intentional infusion of pedagogy into the conception of young people's collaboration with AI.

Keywords: designing AI, AI collaboration in education, AI augmentation, constructivist pedagogy, positive youth development

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FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: A FOCUS ON PRISON EDUCATION IN EUROPE AND PORTUGAL

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This presentation is organized into four sections. The first section provides an overview of prison education in light of international recommendations, particularly focusing on the Nelson Mandela Rules and the European Prison Rules, with an emphasis on the Council of Europe's Recommendation on Prison Education [Rec(89)12]. This segment highlights the promotion of universal access to education for incarcerated individuals and outlines the global principles advocating for their educational rights. The second section introduces the European Prison Education Association (EPEA), a non-governmental organization with consultative status at the United Nations and membership within the INGOs of the Council of Europe. This section illustrates how the EPEA and its national branches (the Potuguese Prison Education Association – APEnP) plays a central role in advocating and advancing prison education across Europe. The third section presents the current state of prison education in several European countries. Drawing on the latest data collected during a webinar organized by the EPEA with its members in May 2025, this section showcases the types of educational and vocational training programs available, as well as the resources provided to prison teachers, with a particular emphasis on IT access solutions. Finally, the fourth section focuses on APEnP, detailing its training programs for prison teachers, its international participation, publications, and resources, and its involvement in European Union-funded initiatives such as Erasmus+. The section concludes with an outline of APEnP's action plan for future development of orison education.

Keywords: international recommendations for prison education, EPEA, European prison education landscape, APEnP

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EDUCATION FOR JUVENILES IN DETENTION

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The guiding principle in the treatment and protection of children is respecting their best interests. Undisputably children's best interests require enabling the development of their personality, talents, and abilities to their full potential, which is to be achieved through education as one of the fundamental children's rights according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Considering that specific circumstances associated with deprivation of liberty may call into question the education of minors detained in various institutions, the subject of this paper is the right to education in the given context. The paper provides an analysis of the case law of the European Court of Human Rights regarding Article 5 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, bearing in mind that minors should primarily be held in detention in order to exercise educational supervision. The results of the content analysis with the application of a normative-logical method indicate that the European Court of Human Rights advocates for the education of juveniles in detention to be maximally aligned with the education provided to their peers in regular schools. The paper concludes with recommendations primarily related to integrating the education of juvenile offenders into the standard education system.

Keywords: education, juvenile offenders in detention, European Court of Human Rights

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RESTORATIVE JUSTICE APPROACHES TO YOUTH CRIME: TOWARDS A POSITIVE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

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Restorative justice represents an approach to resolving conflict, including crime, that is grounded in addressing the needs of the victim, the community, and the offender. It brings together all parties involved in the conflict to facilitate dialogue through which the conflict can be resolved and an agreement reached on how to repair or compensate the harm caused and remedy the consequences of the criminal act. This paper examines the application of restorative justice approaches in responding to juvenile crime and analyzes them through the lens of the core principles of positive youth development and children's rights. First, the paper explores the theoretical framework of restorative justice, focusing on its basic principles, or the Five Rs (Relationship, Respect, Responsibility, Repair, and Reintegration), and their alignment with the four principles of Positive Youth Justice, represented by the Children First, Offenders Second model: promoting children's rights and adults' responsibilities; promoting desistance and social inclusion; promoting diversion and effective systems management; and fostering relationship-based partnerships between children and practitioners. Both conceptual frameworks unequivocally reflect a strong connection to children's rights, the principles of positive youth development, and the broader theoretical foundations of positive criminology, psychology, and victimology. The analysis seeks to determine whether restorative justice approaches and practices should be understood merely as a possibility or as a right of juveniles in conflict with the law. It further examines how this orientation contributes to positive youth development and the advancement of a constructive and developmentally oriented juvenile justice system. The paper proceeds with assessing the current state of restorative justice implementation in Serbia. It provides an analysis of available statistical data on the use of measures consistent with restorative justice principles, most notably the application of educational orders as diversionary measures. Furthermore, it highlights key directions for future reform to ensure a broader, more systematic implementation of restorative justice approaches. The goal is to strengthen the position of restorative justice as a right of juveniles, rather than merely an optional mechanism. The practical implications of such an approach include the development of a more child-friendly and child-appropriate juvenile justice system, which is essential in the context of positive youth development and effort to reduce recidivism among juvenile offenders.

Keywords: juveniles, crime, restorative justice, positive youth development, positive juvenile justice system

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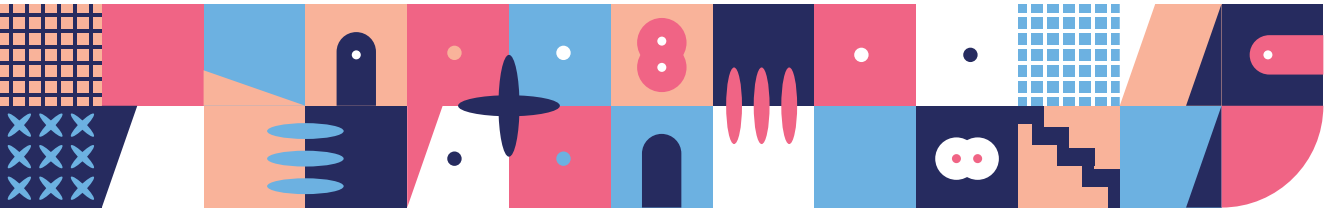
THE NEEDS AND POSITION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE OF GROWING UP IN ALTERNATIVE CARE IN SERBIA: PERSPECTIVES OF YOUTH AND PRACTITIONERS

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Young people who grow up in the alternative care system in Serbia face numerous challenges as they prepare to start an independent life, as well as when they leave the system. Their childhood and youth are marked by difficult life experiences, losses, and changes. Practical experience has shown that they do not always receive adequate support, with adults not recognizing and thus not responding to their needs. Support programs specifically designed for the young people are organized sporadically, during the period of preparation for leaving the system. Once they start living independently, most of them are left without any support. The majority of young people who leave the social protection system are aged betweens 18 and 21, and most of them do not have the possibility of returning to their biological family. The most significant challenges they face include securing housing, stable income, and employment, as well as maintaining a network of contacts and relationships with trusted persons. At the same time, alternative care professionals recognize that they lack the knowledge and skills to support the youth in the exit preparation process. They also believe that they need additional education in working with trauma in order to provide better support in this process. This is precisely why it is necessary to improve the existing system and provide timely and continuous support tailored to the needs of each young person.

Keywords: young people without parental care, alternative care, independence

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POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, STRESS COPING STRATEGIES, AND MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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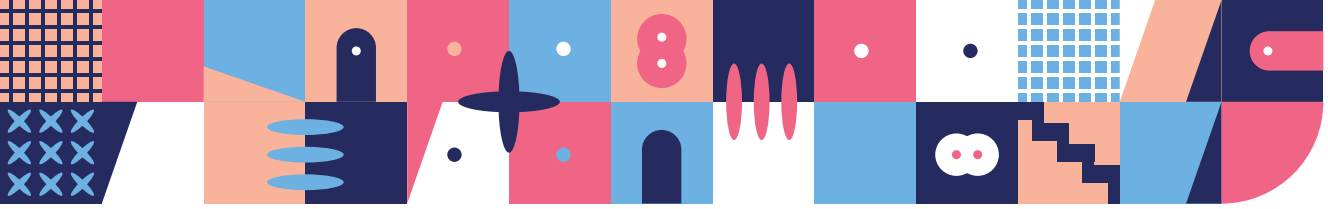
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Adolescence is a life stage marked by numerous changes that increase exposure to stressful situations. As such, it represents a high-risk period for the development of psychological disorders with potentially long-lasting consequences. Therefore, it is paramount to promote positive youth development and effective stress-coping strategies. This study aimed examine the relationship between positive youth development, coping strategies, and levels of anxiety, depression, and stress. The study involved 318 second-year secondary school students. Data were collected using a sociodemographic questionnaire, the short version of the Positive Youth Development Questionnaire (PYD-SF), the short version of the Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced Questionnaire (COPE), and the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21). The results revealed that the positive youth development characteristics of character, confidence, connection, and caring positively correlated with both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies, whereas competence was only significantly linked to problem-focused coping strategies. Furthermore, competence, character, confidence, and connection negatively correlated with levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, whereas caring was positively associated only with stress. Problem-focused coping strategies negatively correlated with depression, whereas avoidance strategies showed a positive association with depression. Confidence emerged as a significant negative predictor of anxiety, depression, and stress. Avoidance strategies positively predicted depression, and caring positively predicted stress. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of positive youth development and offers practical value. Strengthening positive developmental factors and promoting effective coping strategies are key to preventing mental health problems in adolescence.

Keywords: positive youth development, stress coping strategies, mental health problems

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POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL GENERATIVITY IN A SAMPLE OF SPANISH EMERGING ADULTS

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Generativity is a psychological term denoting the desire and actions that contribute to the well-being of future generations. The Positive Youth Development (PYD) model offers a strength-based approach to young people's transition to adulthood. Satisfaction in the Five Cs of PYD (competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring) has been associated with increased social contribution. This cross-sectional study examined the mediating role of generativity in the relationship between PYD and social contribution. It was conducted in spring 2025 and involved 407 university students (63.1% female; mean age = 21.93) enrolled at ten universities in Andalusia, Spain. The participants completed online self-report measures of PYD (PYD-SF; Geldhof et al., 2014), social generativity (SGS; Morselly & Passini, 2015), and social contribution (Wiium, 2018). The results showed positive correlations between the Five Cs of PYD, social generativity, and social contribution. The strongest correlations were observed among the character dimension of PYD, social generativity, and social contribution. A mediation model revealed that social generativity completely mediated the relationship between character and social contribution. These results highlight the importance of integrating the construct of social generativity into the PYD framework to promote social contribution in emerging adults.

Keywords: positive youth development, generativity, contribution, emerging adults, mediation

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INTERPLAY BETWEEN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP EXPERIENCE AND POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN MIDDLE ADOLESCENCE

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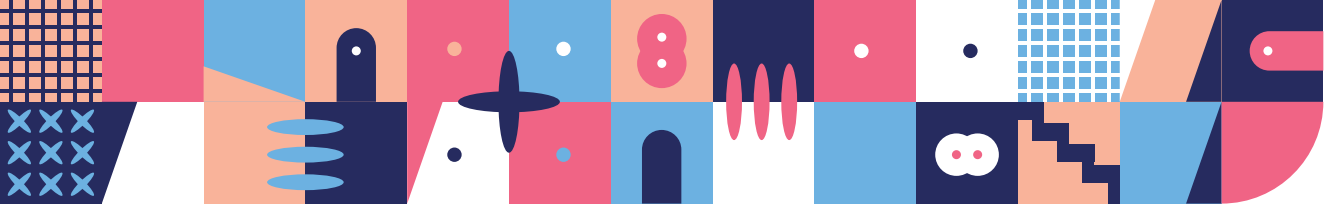
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In middle adolescence, being in a romantic relationship represents a normative experience and an adaptive developmental outcome. Conversely, having this experience constitutes a developmental context that may lead to positive youth development (PYD). Therefore, this study aimed to examine the bidirectional associations between romantic relationship experience and PYD in middle adolescence. PYD was operationalized using the Five Cs model, with the Five Cs being competence, confidence, character, caring, and connection. The research problem was addressed using three-wave longitudinal panel data from the P.R.O.T.E.C.T. project conducted at the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Science in Zagreb. Specifically, 1,133 secondary school students from Croatia (56% female) who enrolled in secondary school in 2021 participated in the study once a year during the first three grades. Each time, they completed the Short Measure of the Five Cs and answered a question regarding the number of romantic relationships they had had. Data were analyzed by testing the cross-lagged panel model in JASP. The aim was to determine whether the levels of the Five Cs in the first grade predicted the number of relationships in the second grade, and whether this experience predicted the levels of the Five Cs in the third grade. The model showed a fair fit (CFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.93). The Five Cs showed significant autoregressive effects but were not predicted by romantic relationship experience. Conversely, adolescents with higher levels of competence and lower levels of character reported having more romantic relationships. Such dynamic interplay between romantic experience and PYD suggests that romantic relationships should also be considered when discussing adolescent well-being.

Keywords: positive youth development, romantic activities, and adolescence

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FROM DISAFFILIATION TO ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP: PROMOTING PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO EMPOWERING YOUTH WORKERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OVERCOMING DISAFFILIATION

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French sociologist Robert Castel developed the concept of disaffiliation (fr. *désaffiliation*) to describe the process by which people become disconnected from key social institutions such as the labor market, education system, and social welfare structures. This concept is used in social, political, and economic contexts, often highlighting issues of marginalization, disenfranchisement, or lack of belonging. It is highly influential in understanding the marginalization of youth in contemporary society, especially in the context of growing precariousness. This paper aims to present disaffiliation as a solid scientific basis for developing participatory action projects aimed at developing practical measures for tackling youth disengagement and empowering youth workers to support young people in enhancing their employment prospects, family relationships, sense of initiative, and active citizenship. The objectives of and activities within the project entitled *Youth in Route: Routes for Fostering Sense of Initiative and Active Citizenship Among Disaffiliated Youth* are presented as a case study. The key project outcomes relate to a three-level training program for youth workers, covering theoretical understanding, practical challenges, and actionable methodologies for both preventive and interventive measures addressing youth disaffiliation; a youth-led digital incubator platform and integrated toolkit, offering resources on personal growth, career opportunities, and community engagement; and youth-led policy journey maps, illustrating routes from challenges to solutions in youth disaffiliation. Methodologically, the project relies on mixed-method and participatory approaches, implementing surveys, focus group interviews, workshops, storytelling circles, and more.

Keywords: disaffiliation, youth disaffiliation, youth work, participatory action project

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CAN USE OF PHOTOVOICE WITH PAEDIATRIC PATIENTS AND THEIR PARENTS IMPROVE HEALTHCARE POLICIES AND PRACTICES?

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Photovoice is a visual participatory action research method. It involves participants taking photographs of their daily lives, discussing them, and sharing them with the public. The aim is to highlight key strengths and problems within the community, draw relevant stakeholders' attention, and initiate positive social change. As a flexible, democratic, and empowering research method that can be tailored to participants' preferences and needs, photovoice is suitable for use with marginalized and vulnerable groups, especially children and youth. In the past couple of years, photovoice has been extensively implemented in projects dedicated to assessing and improving healthcare practices and policies affecting patients of all ages. With a focus on the challenging circumstances of paediatric patients and their parents, this paper defines photovoice and explains the photovoice research process, including problem definition, data collection and interpretation, and dissemination of research findings, intertwined with social activism. Based on pertinent research literature, the paper explores how the use of photovoice with paediatric patients and/or their parents can help raise relevant stakeholders' awareness of issues and obstacles affecting this group of healthcare service users and shaping public health policies. Relying on good practice examples in this field, the paper highlights the advantages and limitations of the implementation of photovoice with young patients and their families. Finally, the paper analyzes the magnitude of photovoice research projects' impact on health policy creators and decision-makers and provides guidelines and recommendations for ethical and effective application of the photovoice method in this specific context.

Keywords: photovoice, participatory action research, paediatric patients, children, health

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VALUE ORIENTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF SUCCESS AMONG SERBIAN AND RUSSIAN STUDENTS

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Value orientations and ideas about success in the student environment are social, personal, ethnocultural, and economic indicators of well-being and potential of social and civil society in the future. This study explored value orientations and ideas about success among Serbian and Russian students. The study involved two groups of students from Russia and Serbia, with 60 participants per group. The instruments used included the Diagnostics of the Real Structure of Individual Value Orientations (S. S. Bubnova), the Idea of Success questionnaire (O. B. Mikhailova), the Self-Efficacy Test (J. Maddux and M. Scheer), and the Life Satisfaction Scale (E. Diener). The obtained results were analyzed using statistical research methods (Mann-Whitney U-test, content analysis, and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient). Interestingly, Russian and Serbian students significantly differed in the indicators of value orientations and ideas about success, despite their shared mental and religious value foundations. Ideas about success allowed for the determination of the general subjective picture of values associated with life success among young people. For Serbian students, family, happiness, love, friends, health, persistence, and education made up an associative series of preferences associated with the idea of success. By comparison, Russian students had a priority associative series of such indicators as money, work, career, recognition, fame, achievement, business, and power, accompanied by more pronounced indicators of self-efficacy and satisfaction with life as components of life success.

Keywords: value orientations, ideas about success, self-efficacy, satisfaction with life, students

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GROWING UP IN THE DARK: CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA – A CASE STUDY

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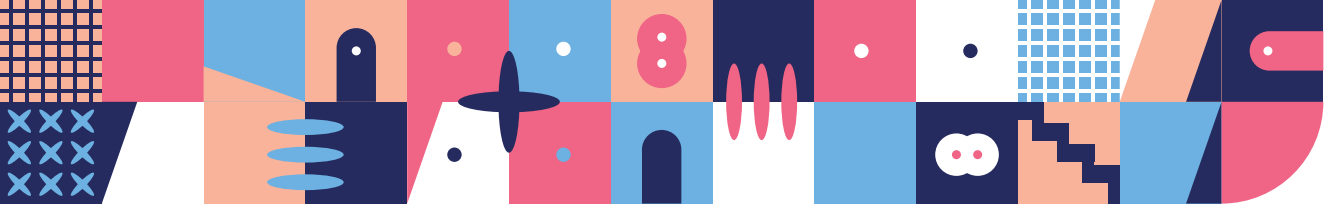
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To understand the characteristics and development of education systems for visually impaired children, it is crucial to explore the effects of various historical and social processes. This study applied an interdisciplinary approach combining historical and social science theories and methodologies. It aimed to explore the childhood and education of visually impaired individuals in socialist Yugoslavia by combining historical sources and life narratives to understand how broader social, cultural, and political contexts shaped their experiences and perceptions of disability. Firstly, the early childhood period was examined to obtain insights into the educational practices and social relations in the family and the wider community. Secondly, the study focused on the process of transition from the family to the boarding school, which exemplified the segregated special education system. Thirdly, the organization of and social relations within the special education system in socialist Yugoslavia were investigated from the user perspective. The research was based on a qualitative methodology employing interview techniques. The collected data were narratively analyzed. This research sheds greater light on the lived experiences of visually impaired individuals during the late socialist period in Yugoslavia by integrating archival sources and personal narratives. By focusing on early childhood, family dynamics, institutional education, and societal attitudes, the study reveals how social, political, and cultural factors shaped the opportunities, challenges, and identities of visually impaired children. The findings highlight the crucial role of historically and socially constructed perceptions of disability and suggest that these perceptions had long-term impacts on individuals' life courses, access to education, and social inclusion.

Keywords: education of visually impaired children, childhood, socialist Yugoslavia, oral history and life stories

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FROM DISCIPLINARY SURVEILLANCE TO BOUNDARY-LIGHT CARE: PARENTING NORMS AND YOUTH WELL-BEING IN SERBIA

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This discussion paper compares historical and contemporary parenting and schooling norms in Serbia using a synthesis of secondary sources, including literary (e.g., Milovan Danojlić and Milisav Savić) and film testimonies (e.g., Black Wave), classic essays, and limited empirical studies, alongside recent international research (e.g., Twenge's *iGen* and Haidt's *The Anxious Generation*). The first strand examines cohorts socialized under expectations of silent endurance and emotional austerity. Cultural documents consistently depict neglected emotional needs in families and schools. Few of these cohorts remained to form a domestic elite willing to publicly reflect on such experiences, intensifying the silence surrounding long-term psychosocial costs. The second strand reviews current evidence on youth well-being, digital life, and changing parental styles. Although today's practices foreground protection and children's rights, the data also indicate that overprotection and boundary-light routines can undermine frustration tolerance, self-regulation, and cooperative autonomy. Bringing these strands together, the paper argues that severity without voice and softness without limits are almost symmetrical errors that differentially produce many risks. Rather than endorsing any doctrinal remedy or current trends, the paper proposes a non-dogmatic, balanced approach characterized by warm, predictable relationships, clearly taught and consistently applied limits, and staged autonomy through real-world challenges in family, school, and community. The aim is to raise debate across education, mental health, and youth policy by showing how cultural testimony and contemporary research read together support a pragmatic middle path that fosters resilient, responsible, and socially connected young people.

Keywords: parenting norms, youth well-being, digital life, overprotection, disciplinary surveillance versus boundary-light care

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THE ROLE OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL BELIEFS, LEARNING GOALS, AND COGNITIVE AND METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES IN PREDICTING ACADEMIC SUCCESS

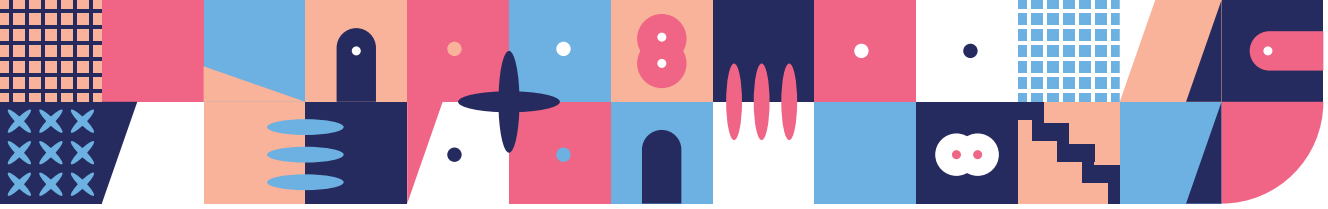
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Numerous previous studies have shown that learning outcomes are affected by students' approach to learning and their beliefs about the nature of knowledge and the learning process. The present research sought to determine whether university students' epistemological beliefs, learning goals, and use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies predict academic success. The empirical study was conducted on a sample of 448 economics students enrolled in years one through four at the University of Belgrade. The instruments used included the Epistemological Questionnaire (Schommer) and the Instrument for Measuring Learning Goals and Strategies. In previous analyses, different variables were grouped into seven second-order factors. We conducted a linear regression analysis to measure these factors' contributions to the prediction of academic success (Grade Point Average). The results obtained showed that four factors significantly predicted students' academic success. Specifically, university students' academic success was positively affected by a deep approach to learning, planning, and organizing the learning process, awareness and orientation towards integration, and the absence of a surface approach to learning oriented towards self-confirmation. In terms of implications for university teaching, the findings indicate that the teaching process should promote constructivist views of learning, an orientation towards understanding and integration, awareness, and the ability to plan and organize the learning process. This highlights the importance of a student-oriented teaching process, at both the university level and earlier education stages.

Keywords: university students, academic success, epistemological beliefs, learning goals, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies

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SELF-ASSESSMENT OF TEACHERS' EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF THE CITY OF RIJEKA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

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Contemporary education is crucially shaped by teachers' emotional competence, that is, their ability to effectively recognize, understand, and regulate emotions. This study aimed to examine emotional competence and job satisfaction levels among 104 primary school teachers from the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County in the Republic of Croatia. In addition to age and gender, years of teaching experience and education level were also examined. The research was based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model of emotional intelligence. Data were collected online using the Emotional Skills and Competence Questionnaire (ESCQ-15; Takšić, 2002), which consists of 15 items distributed across three dimensions. The results confirmed a high level of emotional competence, particularly in the dimension of perceiving and understanding emotions. The dimension of emotion regulation showed a weak positive correlation with job satisfaction, whereas age was positively related to the dimension of expressing and naming emotions, indicating that emotional skills develop with age and experience.

Keywords: emotional competence, teachers, primary school, job satisfaction, contemporary education

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TYPES OF AGONISTIC SELF DYNAMICS UNDERLYING ADAPTIVE AND MALADAPTIVE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN YOUTH

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Adopting the lens of the Model of the Agonistic Self (MAS), we sought to determine which characteristics of intrapersonal dynamics are associated with adaptive and maladaptive forms of identity development in adolescents. The MAS conceptualizes the self as a complex and dynamic field of interaction among multiple personal perspectives struggling for dominance. Accordingly, different forms of identity development can be understood as outcomes of distinct *scenarios* of strategic relations among voices, interpreted as personal value perspectives. The study drew on the dual-cycle model of identity formation, which involves commitment formation and evaluation. Adaptive dimensions of commitment making and identification with commitments are related to well-being, whereas maladaptive dimensions of rumination and reconsideration are associated with distress and perfectionism. Following the analysis of data from 823 participants (Mage = 18.34) assessed with the Dimensions of Identity Development Scale, 13 adolescents with extreme profiles completed the qualitative phase, including the Agonistic Self Interview, a second interview for participatory validation, and a cross-case analysis aimed at identifying broader patterns of self-dynamics within the MAS framework. Three types emerged: Tense Adaptive, characterized by productive dialogue and flexible coordination among voices; Impermeable Adaptive, where stability is achieved through exclusion of alternative perspectives; and Maladaptive, marked by escalating inner conflicts, unstable commitments, and dominance of negative evaluators fostering constant self-doubt and self-devaluation. Extreme identity dimension scores largely coincided with these types. Three case studies illustrating each dynamic pattern are presented, followed by a discussion of MAS implications for promoting adaptive identity development in youth.

Keywords: agonistic self, identity development, types of self-dynamics, adolescence

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FEATURES OF SOCIAL ANXIETY AND SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Social anxiety can negatively impact university students' adaptation and academic performance. Russian and international research has consistently identified social skill deficits and impairments in emotion recognition among socially anxious individuals. Traditionally, social intelligence is considered a key resource for overcoming these difficulties. The integrative model of social competencies recognizes social intelligence as a crucial component of successful social behavior. Although the literature suggests social intelligence can lower student anxiety, targeted studies are scarce. Hence, the present research aimed to identify the features of social anxiety and social intelligence among university students and determine the nature of the relationship between these constructs. The empirical study involved 92 humanities, social science, and natural science students with a mean age of 20 years. The instruments used included the Social Anxiety and Social Phobia Questionnaire (OSTiSF), the Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale, and the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale. Statistical analysis was conducted using Excel and Jamovi. The results showed that humanities and social science students better understood others' feelings. They were also more prone to engaging in new social situations. Natural science students exhibited higher social anxiety. Students who were more receptive to social situations (a social intelligence aspect) also demonstrated higher social anxiety levels, suggesting social cue sensitivity may increase social anxiety. The obtained results can inform the work of university counselors.

Keywords: social anxiety, social intelligence, university students, field of study, humanities and social sciences, natural sciences

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"AS LONG AS YOU'RE ALIVE AND WELL!" – MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH AS A KEY PRIORITY OF PUBLIC POLICY – A VIEW FROM THE CROATIAN CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

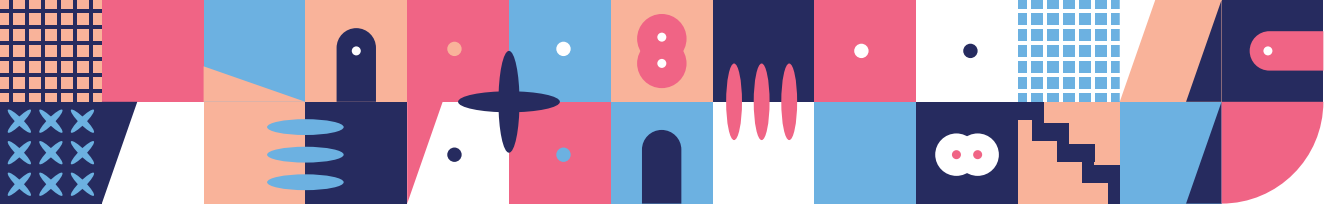
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"As long as you're alive and well!" is a Croatian saying that reminds people of what is most important in life. In recent years, it has gained a new dimension and also come to refer to mental health. According to the World Health Organization's data, European youth's mental health levels decline with age, with the problem being more pronounced among young women. As an EU member state, Croatia follows the set European objectives by adopting national strategies and plans that include greater accessibility of mental health promotion services. However, implementation remains unsatisfactory. In 2023, Croatia had one psychologist per 925 students, and 130,000 primary school pupils had no access to a psychologist at school. Most higher education institutions in Croatia have counseling centers. Yet, university counseling staff report that students' needs exceed counseling centers' capacities. A faster and higher-quality implementation of the adopted public policy measures requires additional research on the psychosocial support needs of children and youth, as well as studies focused on uncovering the causes of the prevalence of mental health difficulties. Experts and the public warn that access to psychological services must be facilitated at all education levels, primarily by employing more professionals (psychologists and psychotherapists), improving educational programs for teaching staff, strengthening early childhood intervention programs, and systematically conducting mental health promotion and prevention activities.

Keywords: legislative framework on mental health protection, counseling services in the education system, accessibility of mental health promotion services, youth mental health activities

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AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF EARLY CRIMINAL CAREER ONSET AMONG JUVENILE OFFENDERS

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The present paper analyzes criminal career onset among juvenile offenders. Criminological research has shown that a propensity or potential for antisocial and criminal behavior contributes to an early onset of a criminal career. Besides personal characteristics, juveniles are most significantly influenced by their family members during early childhood and their peers during adolescence. The paper presents the preliminary results of a study conducted on a sample of 370 juveniles from the territory of the City of Belgrade. The research focused on factors associated with the commission of the first criminal offense before the age of 14, when the legal condition for criminal responsibility is acquired, as well as factors related to the commission of the first criminal offense and the first antisocial behavior among juvenile offenders.

Keywords: juvenile offenders, crime, antisocial behavior, empirical research, Belgrade

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MY SAFE PLACE – PROVISION OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TO YOUTH – VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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Human trafficking represents one of the gravest violations of human rights and a serious global issue that also affects Croatia, particularly vulnerable groups such as children and young people. The National Referral System provides comprehensive support to victims, emphasizing psychosocial assistance and empowerment. According to data from the Ministry of Labor and the Office for Human Rights, a total of 101 underage and 98 young victims of human trafficking were identified between 2016 and 2025. Forty of them were placed in shelters or foster families, whereas the others participated in support programs. This paper aims to analyze the system of formal support for young human trafficking victims and the provision of psychosocial assistance in Croatia, with a focus on intersectoral cooperation and an individualized approach to recovery and reintegration. The analysis draws on relevant research, statistical data, legislation, strategic documents, and good practice examples from National Shelters for Victims of Human Trafficking and social welfare institutions. Psychosocial support encompasses counselling, emotional assistance, and the development of personal resources for coping with trauma. Empowerment, fostering positive development, and strengthening resilience among young victims are key to recovery, resocialization, and reintegration into society. Sustainable progress requires ongoing investment in the professional development of social workers, psychologists, and counsellors, as well as the establishment of long-term, collaborative forms of assistance. The work of professionals in shelters focuses on supporting young victims' empowerment, self-confidence, and social skill development as foundations for successful reintegration. Despite the existing legislative framework, challenges remain, including short-term assistance, weak institutional coordination, and limited opportunities for long-term rehabilitation. These issues highlight the need for continuous investment in experts and durable support mechanisms.

Keywords: youth, victims of human trafficking, empowerment, psychosocial support, positive development

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WHEN PLAY BECOMES RISK: EXPLORING GAMBLING-LIKE FEATURES IN VIDEO GAMES

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This presentation examines the evolving relationship between media and gambling, focusing on the increasingly blurred boundaries between video gaming and gambling. It highlights the similarities between loot boxes and traditional gambling and explores additional gambling-like practices found within video games, including esports betting, social casinos, and token wagering. Loot boxes share critical elements with gambling, such as chance, monetary stakes, and uncertain outcomes. Studies show that engagement with loot boxes is associated with problem gambling and disordered gaming, although it is unclear whether loot boxes lead to gambling problems or simply attract individuals predisposed to such behavior. Beyond loot boxes, various gambling-style activities connected to gaming have become widespread. These include placing wagers on competitive esports matches, playing social casino games that simulate gambling without monetary payouts, and staking virtual tokens for in-game rewards. Furthermore, the rise of gambling-related content on streaming platforms, such as live loot box openings and online casino play on Twitch and YouTube, may normalize risky behavior and reinforce gambling tendencies, particularly among youth. Together, these intersecting practices form a convergent gaming–gambling ecosystem that presents significant risks for vulnerable audiences. This gamblification of gaming underscores the urgent need for regulatory oversight, public awareness campaigns, and further research aimed at mitigating potential harms within the digital entertainment landscape.

Keywords: gambling, video games, adolescence

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YOUTH AND PARENTHOOD: FACTORS SHAPING DECISIONS ON FAMILY LIFE

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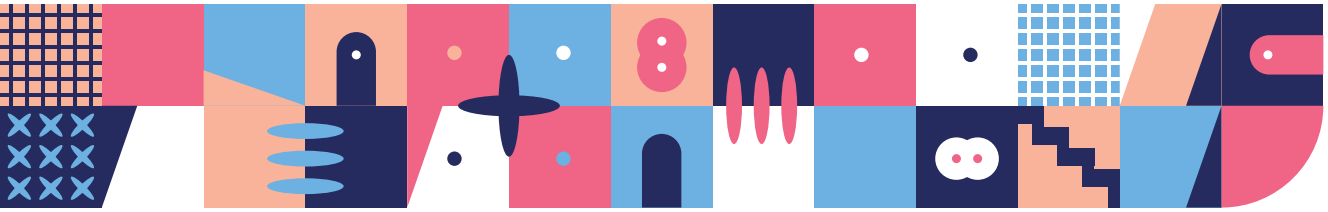
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Parenthood and engagement in family life constitute an important developmental stage in the life cycle, shaped by a combination of individual, social, and economic factors and a framework of personal and societal values. In contemporary society, changes abound and include the redefinition of gender roles, the concept of responsible parenthood, new forms of cohabitation, conscious postponement of parenthood, and the choice not to have children. These changes encourage the re-examination of traditional values and the adoption of new behavior patterns adapted to current societal expectations, highlighting the need to explore young people's attitudes toward parenthood and family life. To examine youth attitudes toward parenthood and identify factors shaping their decisions about family life, 203 respondents aged 18 to 35 were surveyed during April and May 2025. The results showed a statistically significant difference in attitudes toward parenthood with regard to education level. Namely, respondents with lower education expressed a more positive attitude toward parenthood and family life compared to young people with higher education. Furthermore, there was a significant association between religiosity and parenthood plans, with religious respondents proving more likely to plan or already have children. The correlation analysis confirmed a strong positive association between family background and general attitudes toward parenthood and family life, indicating the key role of primary socialization in shaping young people's value attitudes. Although further research is needed to illuminate changes in parenting patterns and family planning, these findings can aid education and social policy-makers in promoting positive attitudes toward parenthood and work-life balance.

Keywords: parenthood, family life, youth, attitudes, education, religiosity, family background

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POSTER PRESENTATIONS



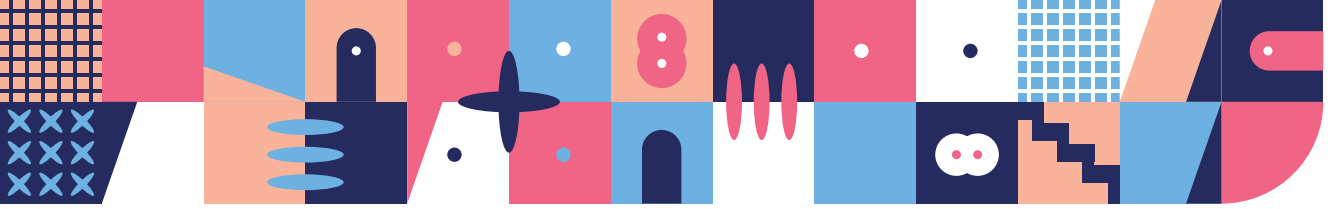
META-ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SPORT-BASED POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

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Recent years have witnessed a rise in the use of sport-based programs in the promotion of positive youth development around the world. However, (quasi-)experimental studies exploring the effectiveness of these programs have produced highly conflicting results. In the present meta-analytical study, the abovementioned results were synthesized with the aim of deriving a more definite conclusion about the impact of sport-based interventions on positive youth development. The three-level meta-analysis included 13 (quasi-)experimental studies published between 2015 and 2025, whose results enabled the calculation of 61 effect size values of Hedge's *g*. Due to the high level of between-study heterogeneity, the mean Hedge's *g* value was computed using the random-effects model. The impact of sport-based positive youth development programs proved positive, moderately strong, and statistically significant (g = +0.412, p = 0.029). The meta-regression moderator analysis further showed that program effectiveness did not significantly vary depending on geographical location (North America, Europe, Asia, or Africa) or the number of participants (several dozen as opposed to several hundred participants). Conversely, the impact of sport-based programs was moderated by program duration, degree of attendance, participants' family structure, sport type, and the climate created by the coach. More specifically, significantly stronger positive effects were established for program duration of several months as opposed to several days, a degree of attendance above 70%, participants with intact family structure, programs based on non-contact sports, and programs in which coaches created a mastery climate.

Keywords: sport-based programs, positive youth development, effectiveness, meta-analysis

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THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL IDENTITY IN BASIC NEED SATISFACTION AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING*

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For young people pursuing higher education, a particularly important aspect of their identity is the study program they have chosen. This study was based on the three-factor model of identity, which conceptualizes educational identity through commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment as dimensions reflecting stability, engagement, and uncertainty in identity development. The satisfaction of basic psychological needs may be fostered or undermined by the presence or lack of commitment to education, whereas a well-formed educational identity can contribute to students' subjective well-being (SWB). These assumptions were tested in a study involving 384 university students aged 18–29 (M = 21.65, SD = 2.73), 80 of whom were male, 301 female, and three preferred not to disclose their gender. The instruments used included the U-MICS, the BPNSFS, the SWLS, the MLQ–Presence, and the GAD. Commitment to education emerged as the strongest predictor of need satisfaction and frustration (R^2 = .25; F = 21.669; p < .001), indicating that firm and stable commitments provide a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In-depth exploration positively predicted relatedness and competence satisfaction, suggesting that active engagement in one's educational choices enhances connectedness and mastery. Reconsideration predicted autonomy frustration, indicating that doubt and instability may threaten self-determination. Both commitment and in-depth exploration were positive predictors of all SWB indicators, while reconsideration negatively predicted sense of meaning in life. These findings highlight the important role of educational identity processes (balancing stability and exploration) in student well-being. Flexible academic systems that support early reconsideration of study choices can help prevent frustration and disengagement.

Keywords: educational identity, basic psychological needs, subjective well-being, university students, positive youth development

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INFORMED CONSENT IN RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN: A PROPOSAL FOR EXAMINING RESEARCHERS' PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES IN SERBIA

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Social research involving children and adolescents has proven indispensable in illuminating the youth's experiences and informing policy development. However, ensuring young participants' protection through ethical research practices remains a critical challenge. Informed consent constitutes one of the most frequently debated yet insufficiently clarified issues in this domain. Considering that informed consent requires participants to understand what participation entails, this process becomes complex when children's comprehension is limited. In countries with official guidelines, researchers can mostly rely on structured protocols. However, the absence of such guidelines in Serbia has left researchers to be guided by ethics committees, personal responsibility, and individual values. This study aims to (1) examine informed consent practices in social research involving children and adolescents in Serbia, and (2) explore social scientists' views on the qualities researchers should demonstrate when obtaining consent. The research will be conducted in two phases. Namely, a questionnaire survey of researchers who have published studies involving minors will be followed by semi-structured interviews with selected participants. The survey will examine sources of information, practical experiences, and perceptions of the consent process, whereas the interviews will provide deeper insights into ethical decision-making and researchers' views on desirable skills and values. The findings are expected to reveal common practices, challenges, and perspectives on obtaining consent in the absence of national guidelines. Ultimately, this study may serve as an initial step toward developing official guidelines that would integrate international recommendations while addressing the specific needs and realities of local research contexts.

Keywords: informed consent, research ethics, children, adolescents, Serbia

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MEDIA EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS

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This presentation aims to demonstrate the importance of media education in developing students' ability to use modern media in a safe, critical, and responsible manner and understand their impact on mental health. The approaches of positive youth development (PYD) and positive youth justice (PYJ) emphasize the importance of empowering children and young people through the development of self-regulation, empathy, and responsibility in the digital environment. Media literacy is seen as a key component of modern civic education and mental health, as it enables students to consciously manage their media habits, protect their privacy, and build healthy interpersonal relationships in the digital environment. The presentation highlights good practice examples from various schools, including Safer Internet Day, Children's Rights Festival, Be an Internet Genius, Media Literacy Days, and SEL for students. These activities were qualitatively analyzed based on student reflections. The results indicate that media education contributes to positive youth development, strengthens mental health and safety, and encourages a culture of digital responsibility at schools.

Keywords: digital safety, critical thinking, mental health

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ADOLESCENTS' LIFE SATISFACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF GENDER, AGE, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT*

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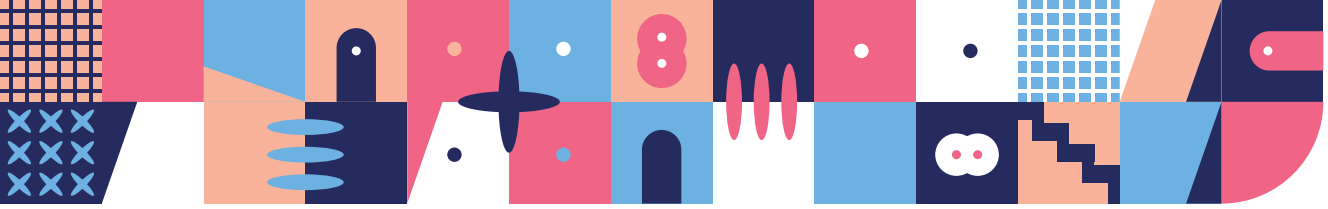
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Life satisfaction (LS) represents the cognitive component of subjective well-being. It is commonly recognized as an indicator of an individual's perceived quality of life. Despite inconsistencies in empirical findings, previous research has shown that LS is influenced by a range of individual and contextual factors. The present study aimed to examine gender differences in LS among adolescents and explore this construct's associations with age and academic achievement. The sample comprised 655 students (58% female) from five secondary schools in Belgrade. Participants' mean age was 16.46 years (*SD* = 1.17). LS was assessed using the Brief Multidimensional Life Satisfaction Scale (BMLSS), which consists of six items measuring global LS and satisfaction with specific domains, including family, friendships, school, self, and living environment. Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*). The scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency reliability (A = .77). The results revealed no gender differences in the overall LS score and most domain-specific scores. The only exception was satisfaction with family, which was higher among male adolescents ($t(561.76) = 2.96$, $df = 561.76$, $p = .003$). Age only showed a positive correlation with satisfaction with school ($r = .08$, $p = .042$), whereas academic achievement was significantly negatively associated with satisfaction with friendships ($r = -.10$, $p = .043$). These findings highlight the need for further research exploring potential interactions between individual and contextual determinants of adolescent life satisfaction.

Keywords: life satisfaction, adolescence, PYD, BMLSS

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STUDENT PARTICIPATION AS A TOOL FOR SOLVING SCHOOL PROBLEMS

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School problems are mostly violence-related, and they are usually discussed after the fact. However, to adequately address these issues, all school actors need to participate in every step of the problem-solving process, from recognizing school problems to defining and monitoring their resolution. Following the basic determination of the concept of participation and its place in legal documents, this paper presents an example of how student participation can contribute to solving school problems. The described activity centers on students' active involvement in every phase, from recognizing and defining problems by employing a research-based approach to devising and monitoring measures implemented with the participation of parents, students, and school staff. Presented from the perspective of a school pedagogist, the activity highlights the importance of participation and shows how the active engagement of teachers, students, and parents can contribute to the fulfillment of the school's educational role.

Keywords: student participation, the school's educational role, problem-solving, students

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